

How Cisco Uses Rich Media for Online Customer Events and Seminars

Live streaming media events generate higher quality and lower cost sales leads.

Cisco IT Case Study / Video / Live Events for Lead Generation: The Cisco® Event Marketing organization generates high-quality sales leads by producing live, streaming-media events for global Cisco Systems® customers. This case study describes these events, reports the results of Cisco research on the quality of leads generated from online events, and explains the business processes in the online events program. Customers can draw on Cisco IT's real-world experience in this area to help support similar enterprise needs.

“Rich media delivered over the Internet enables a cost-effective interactive seminar format for a global audience—and for less than \$7 per attendee.”

— Cisco Event Marketing Group

BACKGROUND

Organizations that produce streaming media events have two delivery options: build a content-delivery network or outsource to streaming-media vendors that provide their own tools and hosting facilities. Cisco Systems® takes advantage of both methods for different purposes. The Cisco® Media Network group produces live events to support internal corporate communications and training, using the Cisco WAN and Cisco Application Content Networking System (ACNS) to deliver

graphics, animation, audio, and video to global audiences.

By contrast, the Cisco Event Marketing group, which produces events for Cisco customers to generate sales leads, outsources production and hosting of live events, a more cost-effective option given its high event volume and stringent requirements for customer service.

Organizations considering the use of rich media seminars to generate sales leads can either use their own content delivery network or outsource to a service provider. Many service providers that offer rich-media hosting and production services use Cisco solutions.

CHALLENGE

Lead generation is an important business activity for Cisco. Online educational programs, also called Webcasts or online seminars, are effective in reaching technology professionals. A 2003 study by Bitpipe, an online network of business and IT Websites, reports the following statistics:

- 40 percent of technology professionals have accessed a Webcast or online seminar
- 76 percent of technology professionals use online seminars and events to educate themselves about new and emerging markets and technologies
- 60 percent of technology professionals use online programs to obtain preliminary information about products and vendors
- 59 percent of decision makers are likely to consult a Webcast or online seminar when making a critical buying decision
- 62 percent of technology professionals have a positive perception of vendors that produce high-quality

Webcasts or online seminars

SOLUTION

The Cisco Event Marketing group generates leads through online events and in-person seminars, also called city tours. The major benefits of online events are global reach, cost-effectiveness, and convenience for viewers, who avoid the time and expense of travel to the seminar location. Cisco produces live (real-time) Webcasts as well as video on demand, depending on the business need.

Live Webcasts

Cisco Event Marketing recommends live Webcasts for high-impact events with large audiences—such as major initiatives and partner programs. Participants sign in on a registration Webpage, then “attend” the event. Live events can include streaming audio and video, synchronized slideshows, live Q&A sessions, and polling questions (Figure 1). In some cases, Cisco prerecords the programs and delivers them in a simulated live format by adding real-time interactive features such as a Q&A session. Cisco retains content from live programs for three to six months in an on-demand archive.

Figure 1. Live Audio Webcast

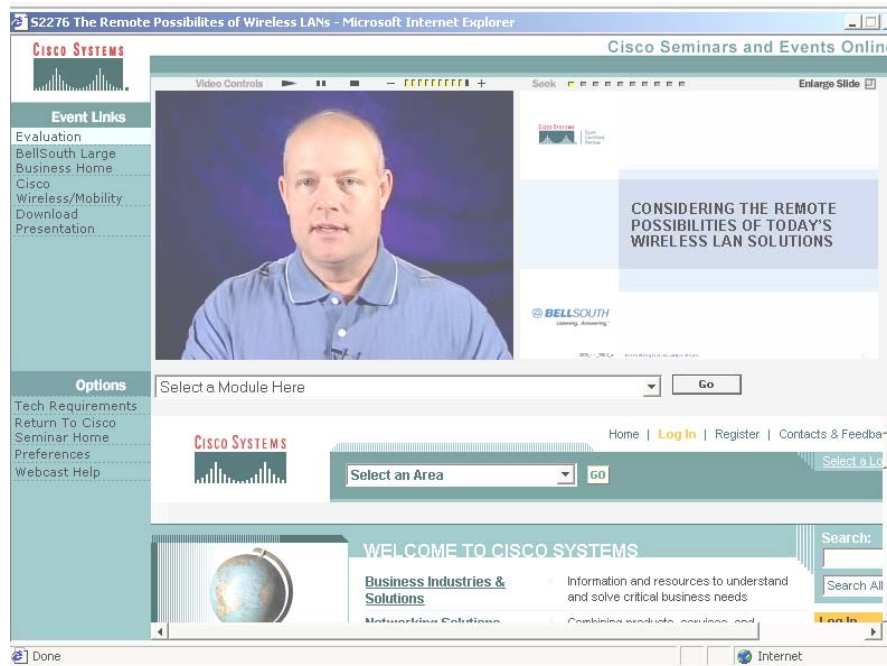


Video on Demand

Cisco Event Marketing produces prerecorded programs for messaging and partner technology solutions that do not require a live interactive forum. The programs can be viewed at any time and remain available for three to six months. Cisco’s video on demand Website features a registration site, video offered in various bandwidths for the highest

quality given the available connection, and synchronized slides (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Video on Demand



Planning and Preparation for Online Events

At Cisco, groups that want to initiate an online event contact Cisco Event Marketing 10 to 12 weeks ahead of time, submitting appropriate campaign or program information and an approved budget. The group begins developing content for the event in conjunction with the Cisco sponsor. Content includes the presentation, pre-existing video clips (in some cases), and links and attachments for more information. Content for live events also includes polling questions, if applicable, and initial questions for the Q&A session.

For demand generation, Cisco Event Marketing generates lists from a Cisco customer database based on target audience criteria, participation in other related events, or partner lists.

Media development includes an online registration page, e-mail invitations—which include an initial invitation, a repeat invitation for nonresponders, a reminder, and an invitation to view the archive—optional banner ads, and optional newsletter articles. Sometimes field sales support personnel are invited to participate in the event.

Before the event, the Cisco Online Events team conducts a rehearsal, including use of the speaker script, polling questions, and initial questions for the Q&A session, which are directed to designated question managers.

After the Event

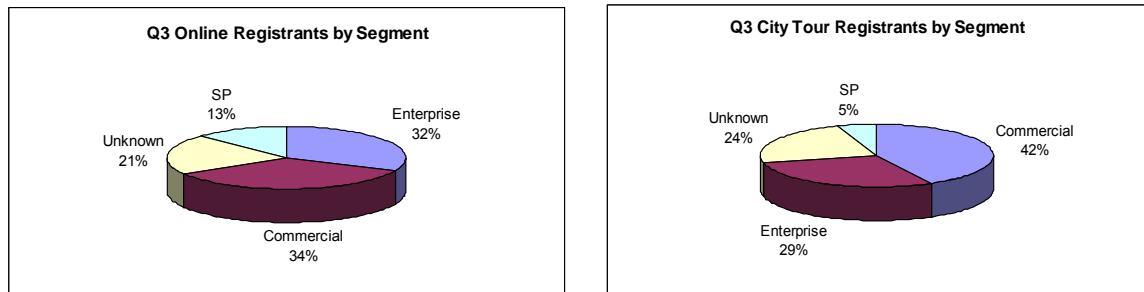
After the event, Cisco follows up on leads that the event generates. The Cisco Event Marketing team develops a post-event report, including analysis of the information and recommended next steps. To maximize the viewership and impact of the event, the Online Events team promotes viewing of the archive to non-attendees or other target audiences. The promotion is heaviest within two to three weeks of the live event, and continues for the duration the event remains in the archive, usually three to six months.

RESULTS

High-Quality Leads

Figure 3 shows the percentage of event registrants by industry. For both online events and in-person city tours, most registrants belong to the commercial segment. Seventy percent of registrants are technical decision makers or business decision makers—the functions that Cisco wants most to reach.

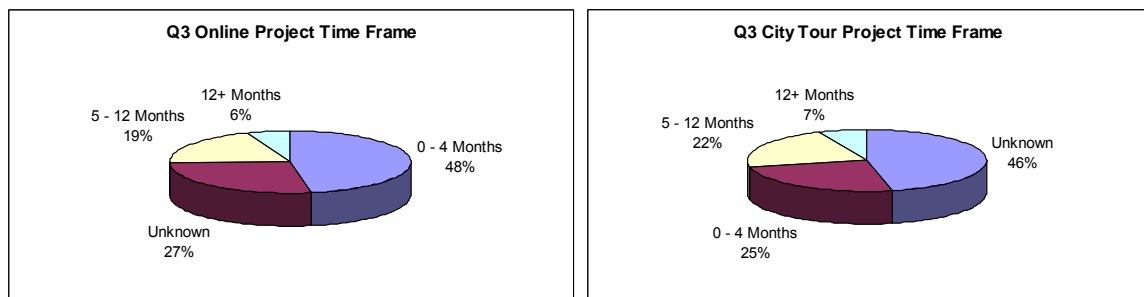
Figure 3. Event Registrants by Market Segment



Near-Term Purchase Plans

In addition to being qualified to make purchase decisions, online event registrants usually intend to do so in the near term (Figure 4). Forty-eight percent of registrants for Cisco online events report that they have a technology project within four months. About the same percent of registrants for in-person city tours, 47 percent, have an upcoming project, but in the next 12 months. Since city tours are more opportunistic, attendance may be guided by seminar availability and not necessarily driven by a defined project. The closer a customer is to making a technology purchase, they're more likely to consult a Website for information that will inform their purchase decision. Online events are a cost-effective way for us to reach customers when they are close to making a purchase.

Figure 4. Participants in Online Events Have Near-Term Purchase Requirements



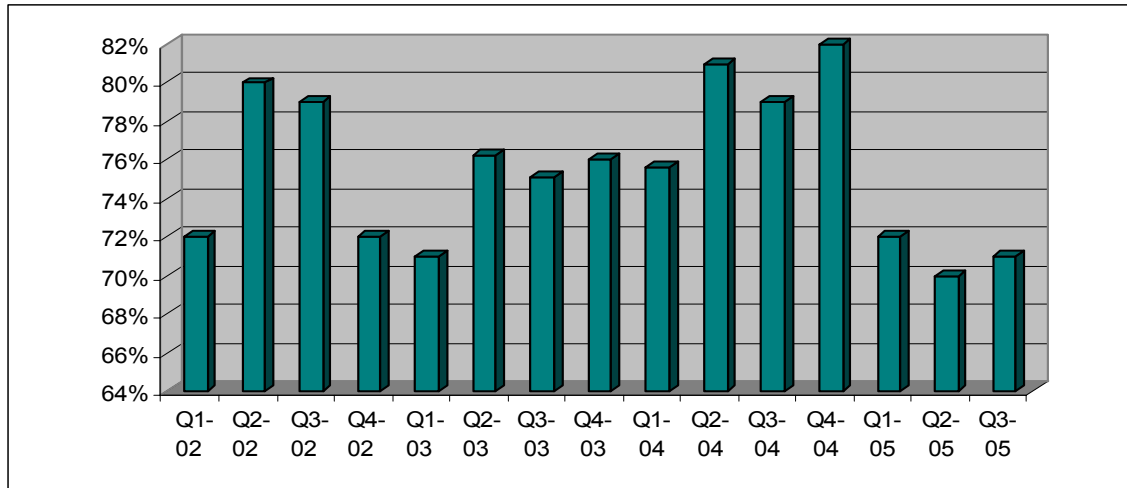
During Q3 FY05, the cost of online seminars at Cisco averaged US\$7 per registrant and \$10 per attendee. In comparison, the cost of in-person city tours averaged \$180 per registrant and \$375 per attendee.

During the same period, the cost per lead for online seminars was \$363, compared to \$789—more than double—for city tours. A greater percentage of online leads converted to sales, as well. “For Cisco, online seminars are four times as cost-effective as city tours in terms of lead generation,” says a Event Marketing Group representative.

Increased Customer Loyalty

At the end of each online seminar, attendees are asked to complete a brief questionnaire. Attendees are asked if they were more likely to buy a Cisco product as a result of the online seminar, 71 percent of attendees in Q3 FY2005 responded “Yes”. The average response over the last 15 quarters has been 75 percent (Figure 7). What’s more, 97 percent indicated they would attend another online seminar.

Figure 5. Percent of Attendees Who Respond “Yes” When Asked if They are More Likely to Purchase a Cisco Product as a Result of the Online Seminar



LESSONS LEARNED

Cisco recommends the following best practices for successful online events.

Planning

- Plan ahead. Engage the team at your organization that organizes online events. Contact them a minimum of 10 to 12 weeks in advance of the proposed event date.
- Provide a completed strategy plan document. Include relevant information and documents, such as white papers, media plans, documents, and budget.
- Clearly communicate the focus of the program and the target audience. Research customers and gain familiarity with lead matches.
- Check appropriate technology roadmaps and schedules for any conflicting programs that might affect the success of the event.
- Identify, engage, and schedule the contributors for content development.

Development

- Develop 20 to 30 slides for a 45-minute presentation. Speakers should spend 1 to 2 minutes talking about each slide.
- Focus on technology and customer concerns, as opposed to individual products. Customers are less interested in product pitches.
- Strategize about event promotion. Components include e-mail invitations, field communications, banner ads, and newsletters.

- Obtain success metrics through attendee evaluations.

Post-Event

- Analyze post-event data. Incorporate lessons learned into future event plans, marketing plans, or marketing strategy.

NEXT STEPS

In FY2004, Cisco Event Marketing produced online events on 125 topics, in five languages, and attended by nearly 60,000 customers and partners. Cisco conservatively estimates it will continue to produce 25 to 35 online events per quarter, with 100,000 responders annually. "Rich media, delivered over the Cisco WAN and Internet, delivers ROI by enabling a cost-effective interactive seminar format for a global audience—and for less than \$7 per attendee," says an Event Marketing Group representative.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To read the entire case study or for additional Cisco IT case studies on a variety of business solutions, visit Cisco on Cisco: Inside Cisco IT www.cisco.com/go/ciscoit

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Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
168 Robinson Road
#28-01 Capital Tower
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: +31 0 800 020 0791
Fax: +31 0 20 357 1100

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